

**Subpart J—Posthearing Procedures, Decisions**

**§ 81.101 Posthearing briefs: Proposed findings and conclusions.**

(a) The presiding officer shall fix the time for filing posthearing briefs, which may contain proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law, and, if permitted, reply briefs.

(b) Briefs should include a summary of the evidence relied upon together with references to exhibit numbers and pages of the transcript, with citations of the authorities relied upon.

**§ 81.102 Decisions following hearing.**

When the time for submission of posthearing briefs has expired, the presiding officer shall certify the entire record, including his recommended findings and proposed decision, to the responsible Department official; or if so authorized he shall make an initial decision. A copy of the recommended findings and proposed decision, or of the initial decision, shall be served upon all parties, and amici, if any.

**§ 81.103 Exceptions to initial or recommended decisions.**

Within 20 days after the mailing of an initial or recommended decision, any party may file exceptions to the decision, stating reasons therefor, with the reviewing authority. Any other party may file a response thereto within 30 days after the mailing of the decision. Upon the filing of such exceptions, the reviewing authority shall review the decision and issue its own decision thereon.

**§ 81.104 Final decisions.**

(a) Where the hearing is conducted by a hearing examiner who makes an initial decision, if no exceptions thereto are filed within the 20-day period specified in § 81.103, such decision shall become the final decision of the Department, and shall constitute “final agency action” within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704 (formerly section 10(c) of the Administrative Procedure Act), subject to the provisions of § 81.106.

(b) Where the hearing is conducted by a hearing examiner who makes a recommended decision, or upon the filing of exceptions to a hearing examiner’s

initial decision, the reviewing authority shall review the recommended or initial decision and shall issue its own decision thereon, which shall become the final decision of the Department, and shall constitute “final agency action” within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. 704 (formerly section 10(c) of the Administrative Procedure Act), subject to the provisions of § 81.106.

(c) All final decisions shall be promptly served on all parties, and amici, if any.

**§ 81.105 Oral argument to the reviewing authority.**

(a) If any party desires to argue a case orally on exceptions or replies to exceptions to an initial or recommended decision, he shall make such request in writing. The reviewing authority may grant or deny such requests in its discretion. If granted, it will serve notice of oral argument on all parties. The notice will set forth the order of presentation, the amount of time allotted, and the time and place for argument. The names of persons who will argue should be filed with the Department hearing clerk not later than 7 days before the date set for oral argument.

(b) The purpose of oral argument is to emphasize and clarify the written argument in the briefs. Reading at length from the brief or other texts is not favored. Participants should confine their arguments to points of controlling importance and to points upon which exceptions have been filed. Consolidations of appearances at oral argument by parties taking the same side will permit the parties’ interests to be presented more effectively in the time allotted.

(c) Pamphlets, charts, and other written material may be presented at oral argument only if such material is limited to facts already in the record and is served on all parties and filed with the Department hearing clerk at least 7 days before the argument.

**§ 81.106 Review by the Secretary.**

Within 20 days after an initial decision becomes a final decision pursuant to § 81.104(a) or within 20 days of the mailing of a final decision referred to in § 81.104(b), as the case may be, a